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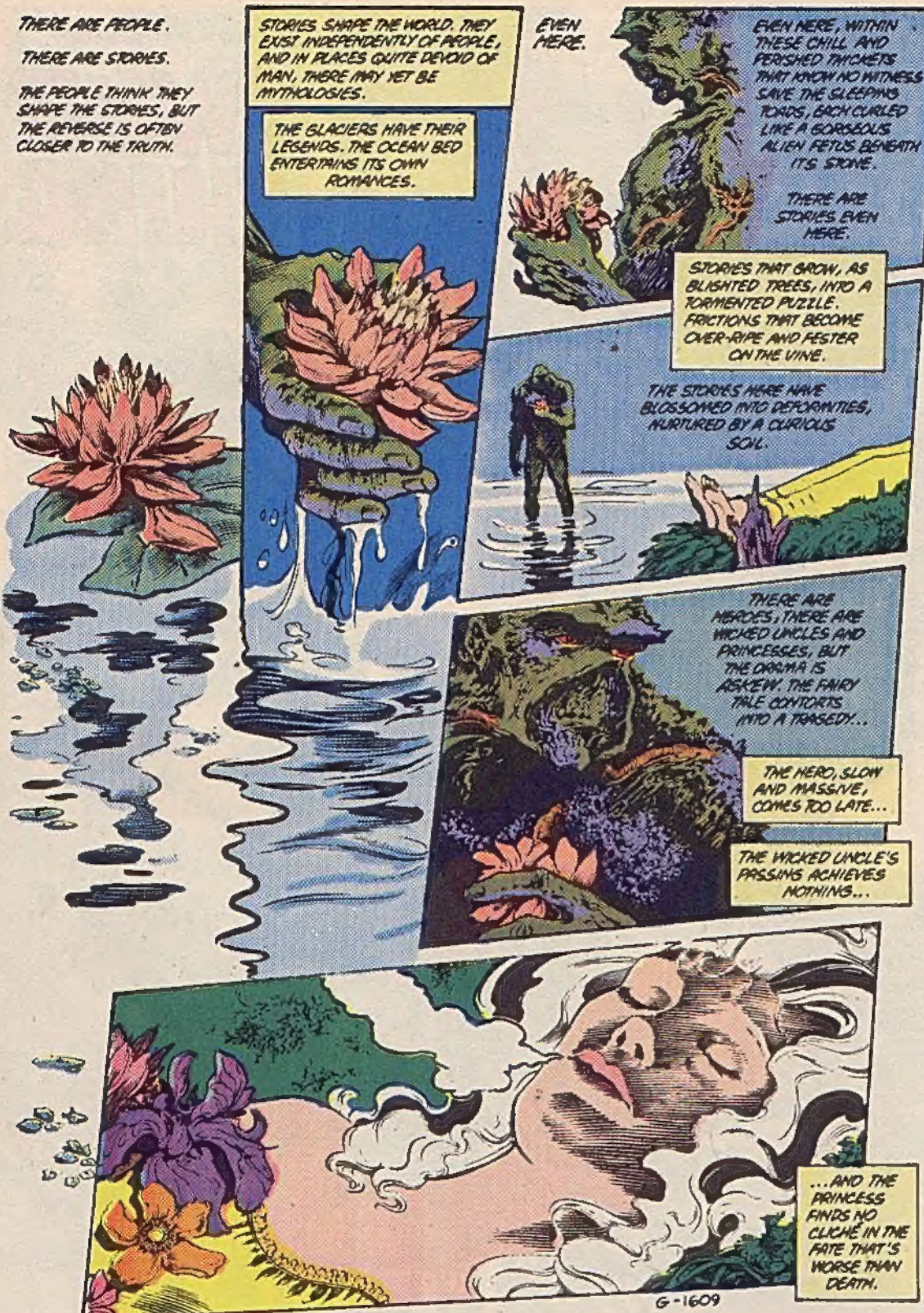
SWAMP THING
BY ALAN MOORE, STEPHEN BISSETTE AND JOHN TOTLEBEN


THERE ARE PEOPLE.
THERE ARE STORIES.
THE PEOPLE THINK THEY SHAPE THE STORIES, BUT THE REVERSE IS OFTEN CLOSER TO THE TRUTH.
STORIES SHAPE THE WORLD. THEY EXIST INDEPENDENTLY OF PEOPLE, AND IN PLACES QUITE DEVOID OF MAN, THERE MAY YET BE MYTHOLOGIES.
THE GLACIERS HAVE THEIR LEGENDS. THE OCEAN BED ENTERTAINS ITS OWN ROMANCES.
EVEN HERE.
EVEN HERE, WITHIN THESE CHILL AND PERISHED THICKETS THAT KNOW NO WITNESS SAVE THE SLEEPING TOADS, EACH CURLED LIKE A GORGEOUS ALIEN FETUS BENEATH ITS STONE.
THERE ARE STORIES EVEN HERE.
STORIES THAT GROW, AS BLIGHTED TREES, INTO A TORMENTED PUZZLE. FRICTIONS THAT BECOME OVER-RIPE AND FESTER ON THE VINE.
THE STORIES HERE HAVE BLOSSOMED INTO DEFORMITIES, NURTURED BY A CURIOUS SOIL.
THERE ARE HEROES; THERE ARE WICKED UNCLES AND PRINCESSES, BUT THE DRAMA IS ASKEW. THE FAIRY TALE CONTORTS INTO A TRAGEDY...
THE HERO, SLOW AND MASSIVE, COMES TOO LATE...
THE WICKED UNCLE'S PASSING ACHIEVES NOTHING...
...AND THE PRINCESS FINDS NO CLICHÉ IN THE FATE THAT'S WORSE THAN DEATH.
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CREATED BY
LEN WEIN & BERNI WRIGHTSON

SWAMP THING

DOWN AMONGST THE DEAD MEN

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WRITER . ARTISTS . EDITOR . COLORIST . LETTERER

Swamp Thing Colors — Bissette & Totleben

ABBY...
THIS BODY BREATHES...
ITS BLOOD MOVES...
IT DOES NOT DECAY...

...BUT WHERE ARE YOU?

HE SAID...THAT HE HAD RIPPED OUT...YOUR SOUL ...THAT HE HAD HURLED IT...RAW AND BLOODY... DOWN TO HELL.
ARCANE SAID THAT...

ARCANE SAID THAT... BEFORE HE DIED.

ABBY...
I WOULD FOLLOW YOU...

...I WOULD FOLLOW YOU EVEN THERE...

...BUT YOU... HAVE BEEN CAST INTO REGIONS... WHERE THE WEARING OF FLESH... IS PROSCRIBED...

...AND I... AM SHACKLED... TO THIS BODY.

NO I'M NOT.

ONCE *BEFORE*... I STEPPED OUTSIDE... THE CONFINES... OF THIS *SHELL*...

ONCE WHEN I WISHED TO ESCAPE... THE KNOWLEDGE... OF WHAT I WAS...

I *CAN* GO... BEYOND MY BODY...

...CAN I GO... BEYOND *DEATH*?

I REMEMBER...THAT THE FIRST STEP... WAS EASY...

NOT SO MUCH... AN EFFORT... AS A GREAT... RELAXATION...

I LAY DOWN...

I CLOSED MY EYES...

I LET GO... OF THE WORLD...

...AND SANK... BENEATH INFINITE... EMERALD FATHOMS.

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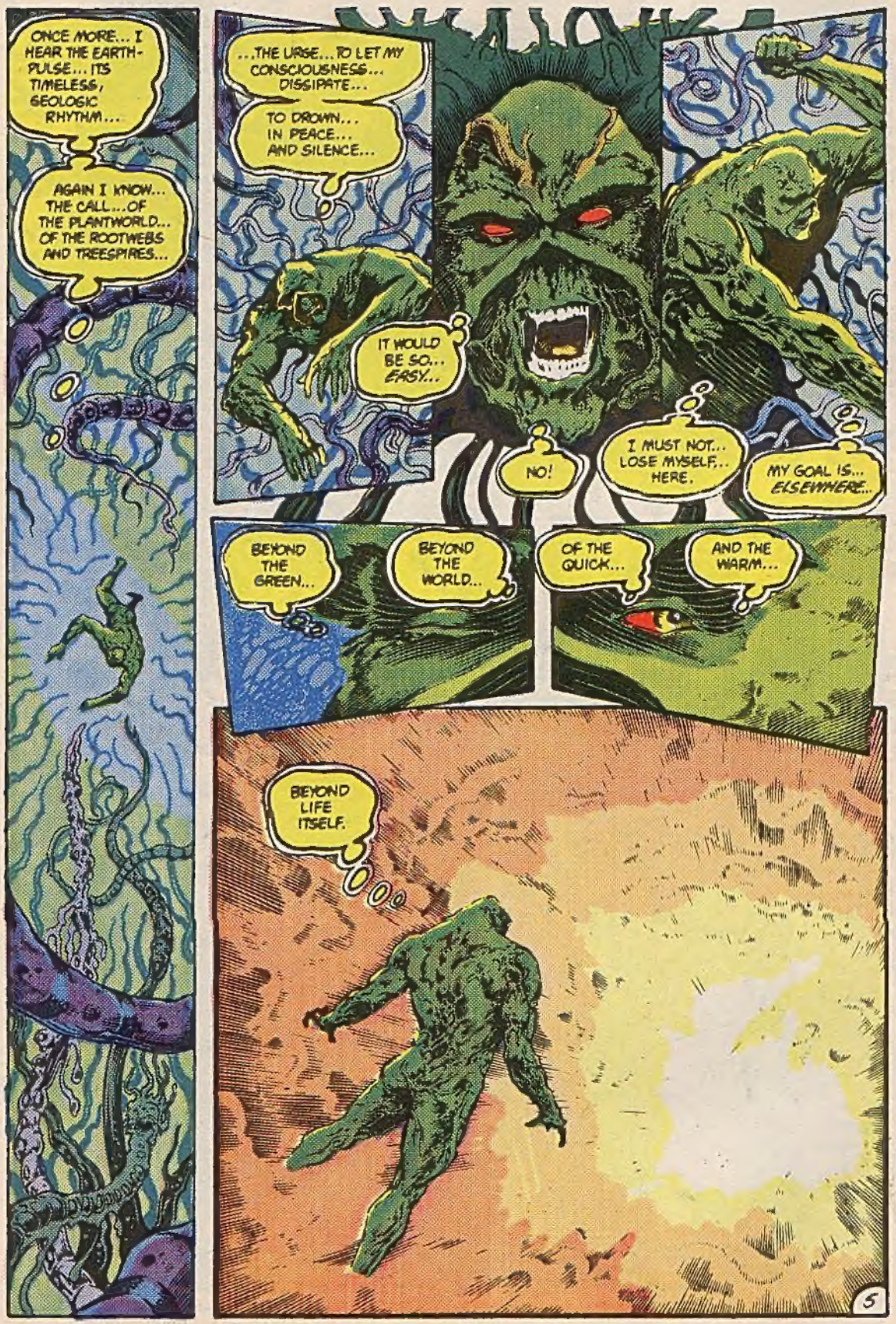
ONCE MORE... I HEAR THE EARTH-PULSE... ITS TIMELESS, GEOLOGIC RHYTHM...
AGAIN I KNOW... THE CALL...OF THE PLANTWORLD... OF THE ROOTWEBS AND TREESPIRES...
...THE URGE... TO LET MY CONSCIOUSNESS... DISSIPATE...
TO DROWN... IN PEACE... AND SILENCE...
IT WOULD BE SO... EASY...
NO!
I MUST NOT... LOSE MYSELF... HERE.
MY GOAL IS... ELSEWHERE...
BEYOND THE GREEN...
BEYOND THE WORLD...
OF THE QUICK...
AND THE WARM...
BEYOND LIFE ITSELF.
5

CAN *THIS*... BE THE AFTERLIFE? CAN THIS BE... *HEAVEN?*

BUT WHY... IS IT... SO *EMPTY?* WAS THERE *NO ONE*... WHO WAS *GOOD* ENOUGH?

NO... NO, IT CANNOT BE... YET WHY... IS IT SO... DESERTED?

SO SILENT...?

OH MY GOD... *HELLO?* IS THAT *SOMEBODY?*

PLEASE, I NEED HELP... I GOT LOST IN THE FOG, AN' MY LITTLE BOY, HE'S AROUND HERE SOMEPLACE...

WHERE *ARE* WE? DO YOU *WORK* AROUND HERE?

LISTEN, YOU MUST THINK I'M CRAZY, BUT...

...BUT I KEEP *TRYIN'* TO REMEMBER HOW I GOT HERE, AN' I JUST *CAN'T.* I...

...I WAS DRIVING JERRY TO SCHOOL, AND...

I REMEMBER, JERRY WAS MAKIN' A NOISE IN THE BACK, SINGIN' THIS SONG FROM KIDDIE T.V. I TURNED AROUND TO SHUT HIM UP...

I WAS JUST PULLIN' OUT INTO THE INTERSECTION, AND...

...AND...

H-HEY...

HEY, WHERE *AM* I?

WUH-WHERE'S *JERRY?*

OH GOD...

OH GOD, THIS IS A *NIGHTMARE!*

PLEASE... PLEASE, I WANNA WAKE UP. I WANNA WAKE UP *NOW!*

MOM?

HEY, MOM, IT'S OKAY...

J-JERRY? WHERE...?

I'M SORRY, MOM. I COULDN'T FOLLOW, NOT RIGHT AWAY. BUT I'M HERE NOW ... WE CAN GO WHERE WE'RE SUPPOSED TO GO.

THANKS FOR LOOKING AFTER HER, MISTER.

JERRY... DO YOU KNOW THIS PLACE?

OH, SURE... IT'S NOT BEEN SO LONG SINCE I WAS HERE LAST TIME.

COME ON... THERE'S LIGHTS UP AHEAD...

WAIT!

COME BACK!

WHERE *IS* THIS PLACE?

BUDDY, IF ANYONE HERE HAD *BREATH*, I'D ADVISE YOU TO *SAVE* IT.

THEY WON'T BE COMING BACK.

INCIDENTALLY, NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN, BIG FELLER.

PITY IT COULDN'T BE UNDER MORE PLEASANT CIRCUMSTANCES.

WHEN DID YOU *DIE?*

I... AM NOT... DEAD.

I AM HERE... OF MY OWN WILL...

WHO... ARE *YOU?* I DO NOT.. REMEMBER YOU...

YOU *WOULDN'T.* IN YOUR WORLD I'M *INVISIBLE.* I'VE RUN INTO *YOU* ONCE OR TWICE, THOUGH.

THE NAME'S *DEADMAN...*

...AND IF YOU'RE STILL *ALIVE,* WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN THE REGION OF THE *JUST DEAD?*

"*JUST DEAD*"?

SURE... LIKE THAT WOMAN AND HER SON...

I SAW HER LEAVE HER BODY AND WANDER AWAY FROM THAT CAR-WRECK ON THE INTER-SECTION...

...BUT THE KID LIVED FOR A COUPLE OF MINUTES. I HUNG ON TO WAIT FOR HIM.

YOU HAVEN'T ANSWERED MY QUESTION.

I AM LOOKING... FOR A FRIEND... A WOMAN...

SHE WAS CAST OUT... FROM HER BODY... UNJUSTLY...

SHE DOES NOT... DESERVE TO BE HERE...

WHO DOES?

LISTEN... I ONLY RECENTLY DISCOVERED THIS ZONE MYSELF, BUT I'LL SHOW YOU AROUND THE BEST I CAN.

IF SHE'S *HERE*, WE'LL FIND HER.

THAT OKAY?

THANK YOU.

THIS PLACE... IT SHIFTS... CHANGES...

ECTOPLASM. THIS REGION IS CLOSEST TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING. AND ECTOPLASM IS A SORT OF *SUB-MATTER* THAT MIMICS THE FORMS OF THE *REAL* WORLD.

IF WE'RE *LUCKY*, WE MAY EVEN SEE...

AHH.

YEAH, I THOUGHT SO. OVER *THERE*...

POLTERGEISTS.

KEEP QUIET... THEY'RE *GRAZING*...

THEY'RE COMPLETELY *MINDLESS*. THEY JUST FORM FROM THE ECTO-FOG AT THE POINTS WHERE PARTICULARLY VIOLENT EMOTIONS SEEP THROUGH FROM THE LIVING WORLD.

IF YOU FLY THROUGH THEM, THEY *BURST* AND SMELL *TERRIBLE*.

HEH.

THERE ARE... *FEW PEOPLE* HERE...

RIGHT. WE GET A COUPLE WHO HANG AROUND, TOO SHOCKED TO REALIZE WHAT'S HAPPENED, BUT MOST FOLK *MOVE* ON WHEREVER THEY'RE GOING PRETTY QUICKLY.

WHEN DID YOUR *FRIEND* PASS THROUGH?

YESTERDAY.

HMMM...

IF SHE HADN'T GONE *ON*, I'D HAVE RUN *ACROSS* HER BY NOW. MAYBE WE SHOULD HEAD ON OVER TO THE *LIGHTS*. SHE MAY HAVE GONE THAT WAY...

... AND, FRANKLY, IF SHE'S GONE ANY *OTHER* WAY, YOU BETTER *FORGET* ABOUT HER.

THE *LIGHTS*? WHAT...

... LIGHTS?

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THOSE LIGHTS.
UH, LISTEN... I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO GO BEYOND THIS POINT. FROM HERE ON YOU'LL HAVE TO GO IT ALONE.
I CAN WAIT HERE TILL YOU GET BACK...
ALONE?
GO ALONE... INTO... THE PRESENCE...
...OF GOD?
GOD?
THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY. SHE ALWAYS TREATED ME OKAY...
SHE?
WELL... YEAH.
UH, LOOK, I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE EXPECTING, BUT AS I UNDERSTAND IT, THERE'S A WOMAN RUNNING THE SHOW. HER NAME'S RAMA KUSHNA...
AS FOR FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND, DO YOU KNOW ANYBODY HERE? MAYBE YOU COULD FIND SOME FRIENDS...
HE'LL FIND FRIENDS, BOSTON BRAND...
FRIENDS...
...AND OTHER STRANGERS.

OH
IT'S YOU.

Y'KNOW, BEING *DEAD*, IT'S LIKE WAITING FOR A *BUS*...

YOU DON'T SEE ANYONE FOR MONTHS AND THEN TWO OR THREE ARRIVE TOGETHER.

COINCIDENCE IS THE SECRET THREAD THAT KNOTS THE WORLD *TOGETHER*, BOSTON BRAND. HAVE YOU BEEN DEAD THESE LONG YEARS WITHOUT LEARNING *THAT*?

THE STRANGER COMES WHERE THE STRANGER IS *REQUIRED*.

YEAH? REQUIRED BY *WHO*?

OKAY, "*I LOVE A MYSTERY*," PLAY IT YOUR WAY...

DEADMAN.. I WILL BE... IN GOOD HANDS... WITH THE STRANGER. WE HAVE MET... BEFORE.

THANK YOU.. FOR YOUR *HELP*

PERHAPS.. *ONE* DAY... I MAY HELP... *YOU*

I SHOULD LIVE SO LONG.

ROTSA RUCK, KEED. I'LL SEE YOU AROUND...

STRANGER. I SEEK... A WOMAN...
YES. ABIGAIL CABLE...
ALTHOUGH HER EVENTUAL FATE IS UNKNOWN TO ME, I HEARD A LITTLE OF THE CONFLICT IN WHICH SHE WAS DISPLACED.
HER UNCLE, THE DEFEATED ANTON ARCANE, PLUNGED THROUGH THIS REGION ON HIS WAY TO HELL, A BLACK AND SHRIEKING COMET, SPITTING MOLTEN TAR...
THE NOISE AND THE STENCH WERE UNBEARABLE.
I KNEW THEN THAT THE LAST OF THE MATTER HAD NOT BEEN HEARD
COME. IF WE ARE TO FIND YOUR FRIEND, WE MUST HURRY..
..ALTHOUGH, IN TRUTH, IT IS NOT VERY FAR.
THESE LIGHTS... I FEEL... AS IF I... REMEMBER THEM..
AS IF.. I SAW THEM... ONCE.. A LONG. TIME AGO..
YES, EVERYONE SAYS THAT.
NOW, HOLD MY HAND WE'RE ALMOST...
...THERE.

THIS . IS *HEAVEN?*

IT IS AN *ASPECT* OF HEAVEN. HEAVEN HAS AS MANY SEMBLANCES AS THERE ARE *CREEDS*..

...AS THERE ARE *SOULS.*

YOU... KNOW IT WELL?

IS.. *THIS*.. YOUR *HOME?*

MY HOME?

NO.

I FEAR I HAVE LONG SINCE BECOME A *STRANGER* IN PARADISE.

I DIDN'T THINK THERE WERE ANY STRANGERS IN PARADISE...
...IT'S FAR TOO SMALL FOR THAT.
ALEC?
ALEC.. HOLLAND?
HOLLAND? THEN I FEAR I AM CONFUSED. I HAD BELIEVED THAT YOU WERE...
...ALEC HOLLAND.
YES.. SO... DID I.
I'M GLAD YOU FOUND OUT EVENTUALLY..
...AND I OUGHT TO THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME GET HERE.
IT WAS.. NOTHING..
ONLY.. A BURIAL...
IT FREED ME I'D BECOME OBSESSED WITH NOT LEAVING MY BODY THERE IN THE SWAMP.
AS A RESULT, I GOT STUCK BETWEEN EARTH AND THE REALM OF THE JUST-DEAD.
IT HAPPENS, SOMETIMES, WITH A VIOLENT DEATH...
...AND IF YOU ARE INDEED THE SHADE OF ALEC HOLLAND, THEN YOUR DEMISE WAS VIOLENT IN THE EXTREME.

YES

THAT'S WHY I'M NOT ANXIOUS TO GIVE UP THE OPTION TO ABANDON IT FOR A WHILE, EVEN THOUGH LINDA WANTS TO.

LINDA? SHE IS HERE?

WHERE ELSE?

SHE WANTS TO GO BACK ON THE MERRY-GO-ROUND, HAVE SOME CHILDREN YOUR WORLD WILL NEED CHILDREN SOON

WHY DID YOU COME HERE? YOU'RE NOT DEAD..

I AM LOOKING FOR ABIGAIL CABLE

N JOLAR, LET ME SEE YOU DO NOT KNOW HER

SHE MAY HAVE PASSED THIS WAY

I KNOW THE WOMAN YOU MEAN. SHE HASN'T BEEN BY HERE, OR I'D HAVE SEEN HER.

LIKE I SAID IT'S A SMALL PLACE

ALEC?

COMING, SWEETHEART...

LISTEN, WHY NOT COME AND SAY HELLO TO LINDA? I'VE TOLD HER ABOUT YOU

NO I DON'T THINK SO. WE.

WE HAVE TO GO NOW THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

ANY TIME

SHE...WAS NOT THERE.

NO.

I FEAR WE HAVE BUT ONE PLACE LEFT TO TRY

YES...

I.. I HAD. HOPED THAT ARCANE... LIBO..

STRANGER . ? IT GROWS . COLD..

INDEED.. AND COLDER STILL WITH EACH STEP WE TAKE FROM HIS MYSTERIOUS PRESENCE..

FROM HIS ETHEREAL CONTINENT OF PERPETUAL AFTERNOON

"HIS"?

BUT.. OSADMAN SAID. THAT GOD . WAS *FEMALE*

BOSTON BRAND IS A YOUNG SPIRIT. HE HAS SEEN BUT A FEW JIGSAW FRAGMENTS...

...OF A DESIGN THAT SPREADS OUTWARD FOREVER.

NOW COME...

LET US SEEK *ASCENSION* FOR OUR DESCENT TO *PANDEMONIUM*.

PERMISSION..?

OF COURSE THE ORDERED UNIVERSE IS BUT A MICROSCOPIC BUBBLE IN AN OCEAN OF SEETHING MADNESS

THE FORCES BEYOND THIS POINT ARE NOT TO BE LIGHTLY DISTURBED...

THUS, THERE IS ONE WHO IS APPOINTED TO THIS DISMAL TERRITORY AS A *SENTINEL*, THOUGH OFTEN HIS DUTIES TAKE HIM *ELSEWHERE*.

HE IS HERE NOW.

BUT.. THERE IS... *NOTHING*...

NOTHING BUT.. *BLACKNESS*..

THE BLACKNESS IS A PART OF WHAT HE IS NOW PREPARE YOURSELF...

...AS HE REVEALS THE *LIGHT*.

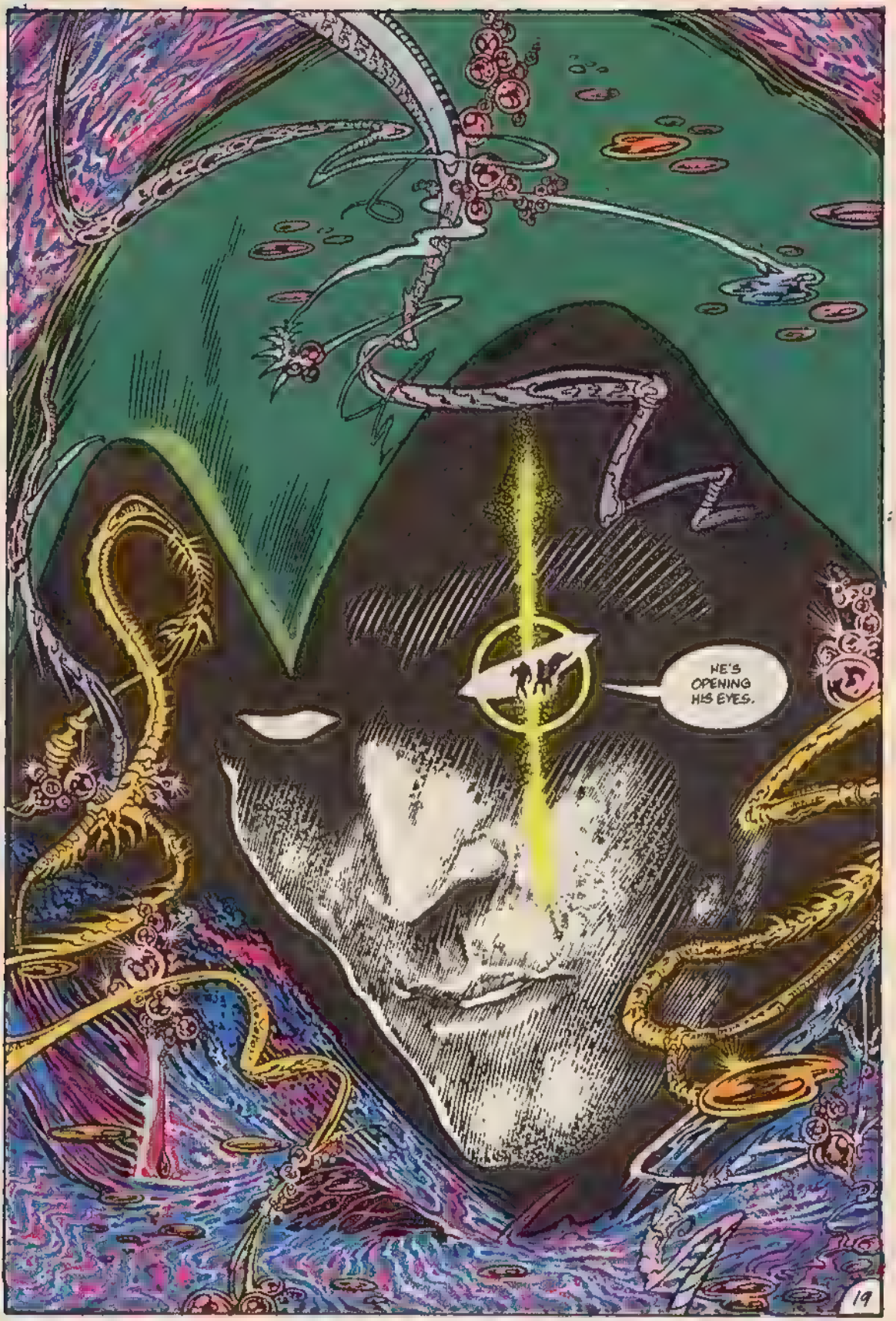
THAT BAND.. OF *WHITENESS*... GROWING WIDER...

STRANGER...?

WHAT IS... *HAPPENING*?

HAPPENING?

CAN'T YOU *GUESS*?


HE'S OPENING HIS EYES.

WHO APPROACHES... THE SPECTRE?

ARE YOU NATIVE TO THESE BORDERLANDS OF FORM AND REASON?

NO.

A STRANGER.

AHH.

IT IS YOU, BROTHERLESS ONE...

...AND ANOTHER BESIDE YOU? I SHALL CONDENSE MY SUBSTANCE THAT I MAY SEE HIM MORE KEENLY.

THERE THERE THERE THERE THERE

THERE

AN EARTH ELEMENTAL.

HOW STRANGE. I HAD THOUGHT THEM ALL LONG SINCE DESTROYED..

WHAT IS YOUR NAME, CREATURE, AND WHY HAS THE GRAY WALKER BROUGHT YOU TO ME?

I..

I.. AM. THE SWAMP THING

I SEEK A FRIEND

THERE ARE NO FRIENDS IN THIS PLACE

IT IS TOO LARGE

DO YOU REFER TO THE WOMAN ABIGAIL CABLE?

YOU ?

YOU HAVE SEEN HER ?

OF COURSE

SHE IS CONSIGNED TO THE UNSPEAKABLE REALMS BENEATH

... AND THAT IS WHERE SHE MUST STAY!

STAY. ?

NNNNaaaaaa!!!

CONTAIN YOURSELF! THIS IS ONE WHO CANNOT BE FOUGHT.

SPECTRE! HEAR ME! THE WOMAN WAS CONDEMNED BY ONE WHO HAD NO RIGHT!

ALL THAT HAPPENS, HAPPENS BY DECREE OF *ONE WILL*.

THERE IS ONE VOICE THAT SPEAKS IN *ALL* THINGS.

IF THE WOMAN IS *CONDEMNED*, THEN THAT IS THE FATE SET ASIDE FOR HER

BUT IF SHE IS *UNJUSTLY* CONDEMNED TO HELL, THEN HELL HAS NO *REASON*...

...AND IF THAT IS *SO*, SPECTRE, THEN *PARADISE ITSELF* IS AN EMPTY CONFECTION.

PERHAPS...

YET, IF THINGS ARE AS YOU SAY, THEN WOULD NOT HER RETURN FROM DEATH RENDER *LIFE ITSELF* MEANINGLESS?

SUCH THINGS ARE NOT ALLOWED, STRANGER.

NO?

THEN WHAT OF *JIM CORRIGAN*?

HAHAHA HAHA HAHAHA HA HA!!

YOUR CLEVERNESS HAS NOT DIMMED, STRANGER, NOR YOUR IMPUDENCE.

OF ALL THE PRESENCES, YOU WERE ALWAYS MY FAVORITE.

YOU MAY PASS.

STRANGER.
WHO WAS JIM CORRIGAN ?
HE WAS.
..WHILE HE LIVED

THIS PLACE..

IT IS.. *TERRIBLE*.

NOT SO TERRIBLE AS OUR *DESTINATION*.

WE ARE APPROACHING THE VERY *EDGE* OF RATIONAL BEING HERE.

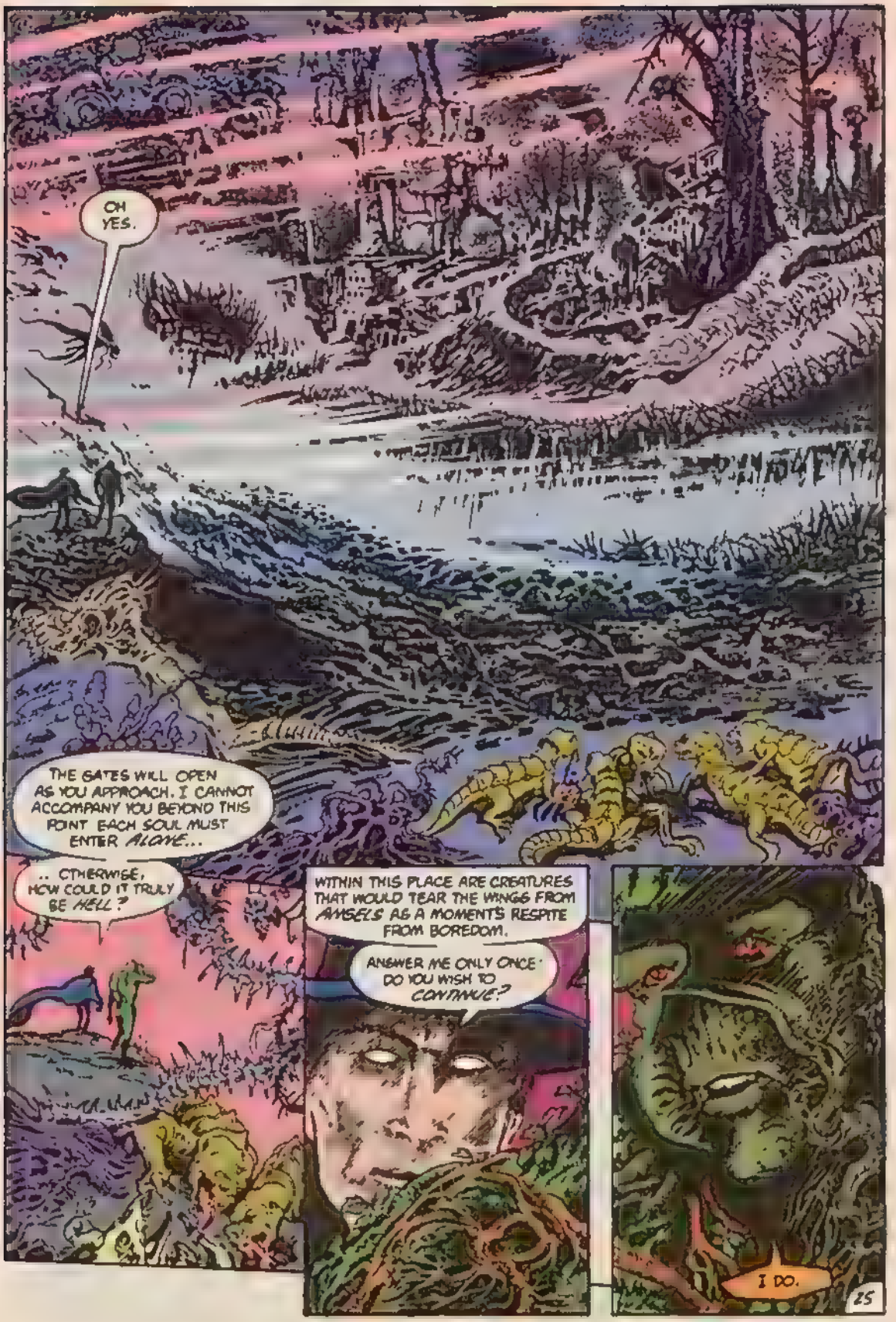
WHAT YOU SEE ABOUT YOU IS BUT THE *THUMB-PRINT* OF CHAOS.

A LITTLE WAY AHEAD THE SENSELESS RAGING OF THE *CHAOPLASM* BEGINS, AND CONTINUES OUT TO *INFINITY*.

WE APPROACH THE LAST PLACE THAT CAN TRULY BE *CALLED* A PLACE.

AND.. THIS *PLACE*...

IT IS... *HELL?*


OH YES.
THE GATES WILL OPEN AS YOU APPROACH. I CANNOT ACCOMPANY YOU BEYOND THIS POINT. EACH SOUL MUST ENTER ALONE...
.. OTHERWISE, HOW COULD IT TRULY BE HELL?
WITHIN THIS PLACE ARE CREATURES THAT WOULD TEAR THE WINGS FROM ANGELS AS A MOMENT'S RESPITE FROM BOREDOM.
ANSWER ME ONLY ONCE: DO YOU WISH TO CONTINUE?
I DO.

AHH...
IT WARMS MY HEART TO MEET WITH THEE AGAIN..
...AND MEET WITH COURAGE, FREE FROM HESITATION..
...OR CAN IT BE YOU ARE AFRAID OF PAIN...
...AND SIMPLY LACKING IN IMAGINATION?
NO MATTER. I AM CONFIDENT YOUR PLAN AFFORDS AMUSEMENT RARE...
...FOR ETRIGAN.

ETRIGAN.

AH, YES. THE DEMON THAT FANCIES HIMSELF HALF A *MAN*

I HAVE *HEARD* OF YOU

'OH, KETTLE! THOU ART BLACK!" THE POT EXCLAIMS *I* KNOW ONE MORE AMBIVALENT FAR THAN I..

A LONELY SOUL, WHO, MENTIONING NO NAMES, WILL NOT CHOOSE 'TWIXT THE *SULFUR* AND THE *SKY*

WHO WILL NOT SERVE *ABOVE*, NOR REIGN *BELOW*, BUT WALKS A PATH 'TWIXT *MOLOCH* AND THE *MAHESUR*.

WHO DO I SPEAK OF? IS IT ONE WE KNOW? OR COULD I BE REFERRING TO.

ENOUGH.

I DO NOT WISH TO HEAR ANY MORE OF THIS.

IF YOU HAVE COME TO MOCK, THEN BEGONE TO WHATEVER PIT SPAWNED YOU.

TO *MOCK*? WHAT? I? 'TIS *HELP*, SIR, THAT I BRING

..JUST AS THE BRUTE BEHIND YOU AIDED *ME* WHEN I PURSUED THE DISGUSTFUL *MONKEY KING*

I WOULD *REPAY* HIS KINDNESS

...FOR A *FEE*.

YOUR DISTORTIONS, THOUGH CUNNINGLY EXPRESSED, FAIL TO ENTERTAIN ME

A FEE?

AND WHAT IS THE PRICE OF A DEMON'S HIRE?

YOU MAY DECIDE. WHATEVER SUITS YOU *BEST*.

WHAT IS THIS *BLOOM* YOU WEAR UPON YOUR BREAST?

THIS?
IT IS A FLOWER, PLUCKED UPON THE WESTERN SLOPE OF HEAVEN.
HOW PRECIOUS. LET THIS BLOSSOM BE MY FEE, TO PLANT WITHIN YON DARK SATANIC MILL...
...AND HAVE ITS BEAUTY THERE FOR ALL TO SEE, COMPARED WITH WHICH, HELL SHALL GROW BLEAKER STILL.
NOW, GATHER TO ME, CREATURE OF THE FEN, AND WE SHALL WALK, AS ONE, BEYOND THOSE WALLS 'MIDST SHRIEKING MAIDS AND SOBBING GENTLEMEN.
THE GATES SWING OPEN! THE AVERNO CALLS!
ETRIGAN! WAIT!
YOU CANNOT ACCOMPANY HIM! THE RULES...
THE RULES? AND IF I BREAK THESE RULES, PRAY TELL SHALL I BE PUNISHED?
SENT, PERHAPS, TO HELL?
HAHAHAH

ETRIGAN.. THE ONE I SEEK...

HAVE YOU.. SEEN HER?

HOW COULD I MISS HER, IN THIS FORTRESS DIRE, WHERE ALL ONCE WARM AND SWEET GROWS COLD AND SOUR?

AGAINST THE GRIME AND ROT AND BLOOD-STREAKED MIRE SHE STOOD.

...AS PALE, AS RADIANT...

...AS A FLOWER

HO! ETRIGAN PLANTS FLOWERS!

WE'D HEARD THAT YOU WERE NOW HALF A MAN...

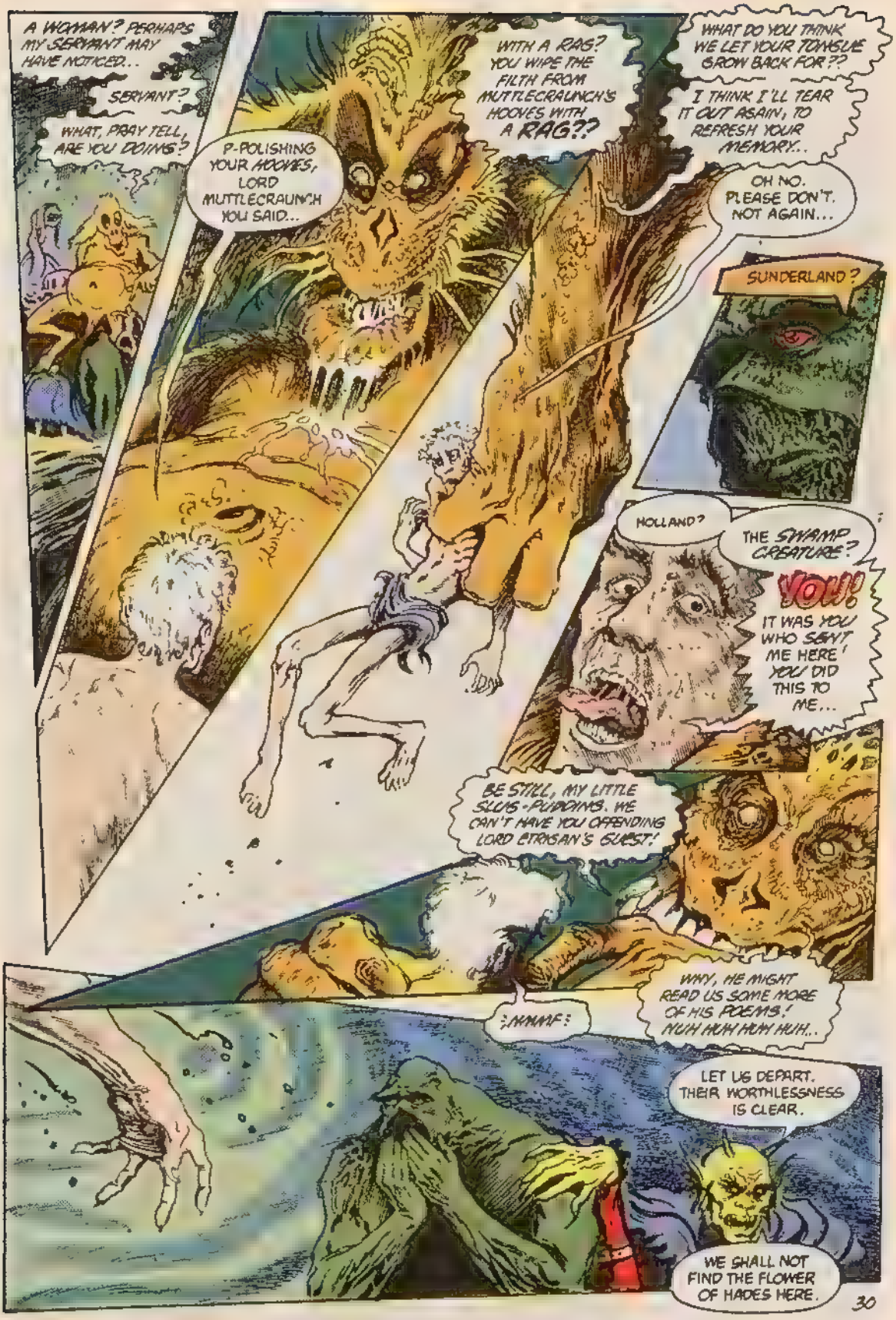
BUT IT SEEMS THAT YOU ARE RATHER HALF A WOMAN!

MUTTLECRAUNCH, YOU TUMOROUS EXCRESCENCE. HAVE A CARE! ETRIGAN'S A RHYMING DEMON NOW, AND FAR ABOVE SUCH BANTER WITH HIS KIN.

AREN'T YOU, ETRIGAN?

FRIENDS MUTTLECRAUNCH AND FLUTCH, YOUR WIT REMAINS LESS CAUSTIC THAN THE POX WHICH GNAWS YOUR BRAINS.

TO SPARE YOUR TYMPANTS, RESPOND WITHOUT DELAY: WE SEEK A WOMAN. HAS SHE PASSED THIS WAY?


A WOMAN? PERHAPS MY SERVANT MAY HAVE NOTICED..
SERVANT?
WHAT, PRAY TELL, ARE YOU DOING?
P-POLISHING YOUR HOOVES, LORD MUTTLECRAUNCH YOU SAID...
WITH A RAG? YOU WIPE THE FILTH FROM MUTTLECRAUNCH'S HOOVES WITH A RAG??
WHAT DO YOU THINK WE LET YOUR TONGUE GROW BACK FOR??
I THINK I'LL TEAR IT OUT AGAIN, TO REFRESH YOUR MEMORY..
OH NO. PLEASE DON'T. NOT AGAIN...
SUNDERLAND?
HOLLAND?
THE SWAMP CREATURE?
YOW!
IT WAS YOU WHO SENT ME HERE! YOU DID THIS TO ME...
BE STILL, MY LITTLE SLUG-PUDDING. WE CAN'T HAVE YOU OFFENDING LORD ETRIGAN'S GUEST!
;HMMF!
WHY, HE MIGHT READ US SOME MORE OF HIS POEMS! HUH HUH HUH HUH..
LET US DEPART. THEIR WORTHLESSNESS IS CLEAR.
WE SHALL NOT FIND THE FLOWER OF HADES HERE.

DEMON...

HOW .. COULD GOD... *ALLOW*... SUCH A PLACE ?

THINK YOU *GOD* BUILT THIS PLACE, WISHING MAN ILL AND NOT LUSTS UNCONTROLLED OR SWORDS UNSHEATHED?

NOT GOD, MY FRIEND. THE TRUTH'S *MORE* HIDEOUS *STILL*: THESE HALLS WERE CARVED BY *MEN* WHILE YET THEY BREATHED.

GOD IS NO PARENT OR *POLICEMAN GRIM* DISPENSING TREATS OR PUNISHMENTS TO ALL.

EACH SOUL CLIMBS OR DESCENDS BY ITS OWN WHIM. HE *WATCHES*, BUT HE CANNOT PREVENT THEIR FALL.

WE SUFFER AS WE *CHOOSE*. NOTHING'S AMISS. *ALL* TORMENTS ARE DESERVED...

...NONE MORE THAN *THIS*.

HUH· HOLLAND?

HUH· HOW HUH· NICE TO SEE YOU...

CONTINUED ON 2ND TO LAST FOLLOWING

HELLO, ARCANE

I MUH-MUST LOOK QUITE A MUH-*MESS*...

INSECT EGGS, YOU KNOW MUH-HATCHING, INSUH-SIDE ME...

VERY APPROPRIATE. *HA HA HA HA*...

SUH-STILL, I MUH-HAD MY RUH-*REVENGE*, DIDN'T I? YUH-YOU *HAVE* CUH-COME FOR MUH-MY *NIECE*, I TAKE IT?

SHE'S UP AHEAD.

WUH-WHEN YOU SUH-SEE HER, YOU WON'T WUH-*WANT* HER.

NUH-NO! WAIT! PUH-PLEASE, BEFORE YOU GUH-GO...

HUH-HOW MANY YEARS HAVE I BUH-*BEEN* HERE?

SINCE YESTERDAY

YESTERDAY?

EEEEEEEEEEEEE

HE SAID THAT... SHE WAS AHEAD... THAT I WOULD NOT WANT HER...
EEEE

HE PUSHED US TO ONE SIDE
ENOUGH!!

THE BUGGER'S BLED MY NEB! IT IS SOME ELEMENTAL...
FOOL! WOULD YOU FIGHT ALL HELL? YOUR PRIZE IS NOW! TAKE UP YOUR FALLEN BLOSSOM NOW, AND RUN!
SO, ETRISAN HALF-A-MAN, YOU AND THE EARTH-GENII WORK TOGETHER TO DEPRIVE US OF OUR SPOILS!
I HAD FEARED YOU HAD GROWN SOFT WITH MORTALS.
WHAT BRIBE WERE YOU OFFERED?
I GAINED A FLOWER. HE TAKES ONE, IN RETURN. AS FOR MY SOFTNESS, JUDGE IT...
"... AS YOU BURN!"
HHAULPFSSH!!
THE HALF-A-MAN HAS TURNED UPON HIS KIN!
LET US RIP THE CONCEITED VERSES FROM HIS THROAT, ALONG WITH THE VEINS!

NO!

YOU RUH-RESCUED HER!

BUT THUH THAT WAS MY *DEFENCE*! THAT WAS ALL I HAD LUH-*LEFT* IN THIS PLACE! SHE MUST STUH-*STAY*! DUH DAMNED LIKE *ME*..

DAMNED LIKE MEEEEEEE

AS FLIES AROUND SPOILED MEAT THEY CONGREGATE, NOT FOR REVENGE, EACH SLOBBERING LIKE A HOUND

IF SHE YOU CLASP IS TO AVOID THEIR FATE--

--WE MUST BE SWIFT TO GAIN THE *HIGHER GROUND*!

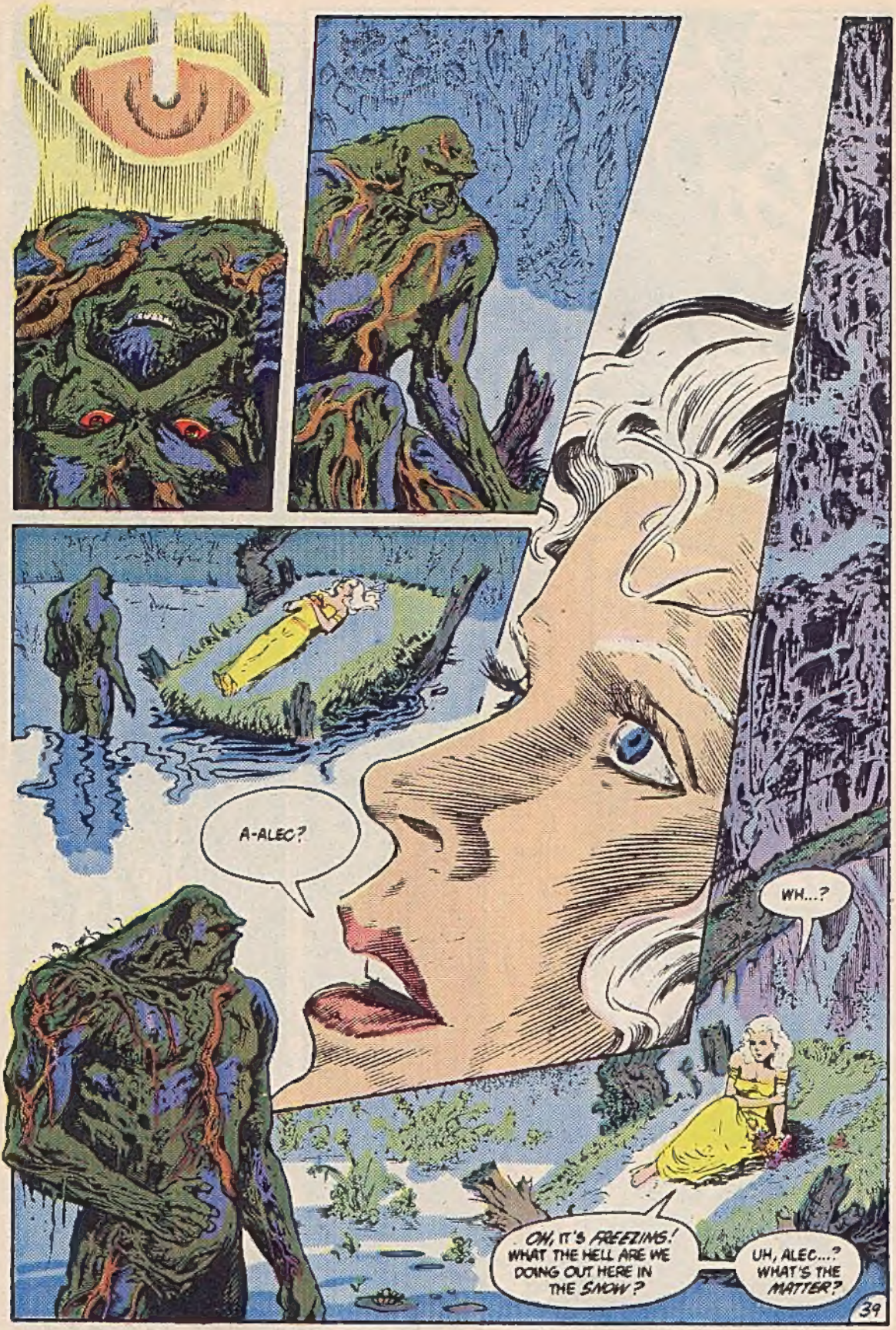
CLING! THOUGH I MAY REMOVE YOU FROM THIS PLACE, THE MAGICKS USED REQUIRE BOTH *TIME*..

AND SPACE

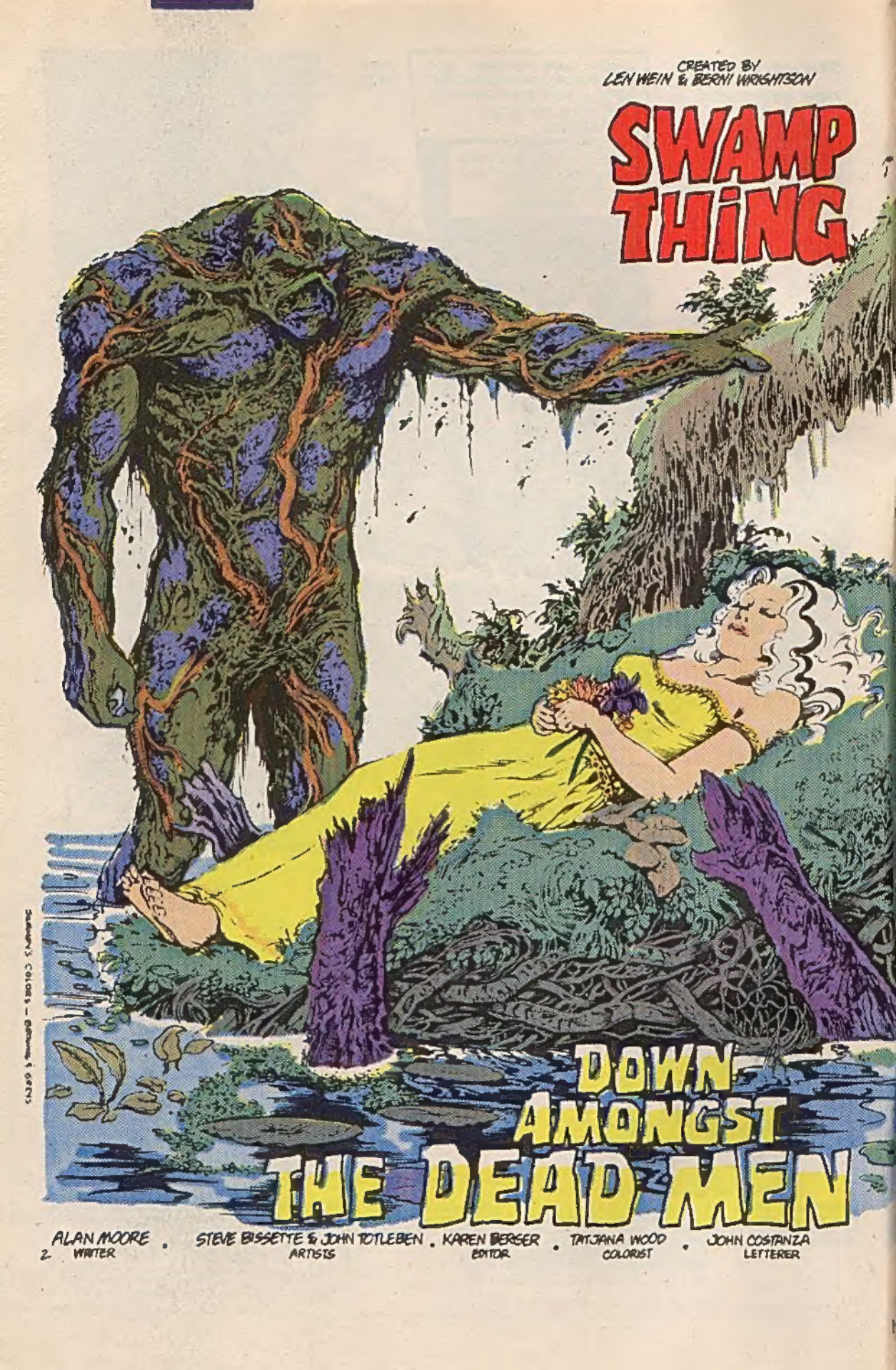
CLIMB FASTER, SCUM-FLAGONS! DON'T GIVE HIM PAUSE TO OPEN A CHYMIC WINDOW!
B-BUT, LORD RUNDELTHRATT... HE EMPLOYS THE EXHALATION INFERNAL...
CLIMB!
ETRIGAN... THEY ARE ALMOST... UPON US...
BE STILL! 'TIS SPACE ITSELF I SEEK TO REND.
ONE SLIP MAY TEAR THE CLOTH FROM END TO END!
... OF RARE GEOMETRY.
AAAAA!
THOU QUANTUM WAPS AND CHERUBS BY WHOSE DANCE IS SUBSTANCE FORMED TO SHAPE THE FIELDS, WE KNOW YOUR PERFECT WALTZ THAT CONJURES FORM FROM CHANCE MUST PAUSE, TO FREE US FROM THESE WASTES BELOW.
BY ROOT OF MINUS NINE AND CIRCLE SQUARED SET RIGHT AND TRUE AGAINST DIMENSIONS THREE LET OUR ILL-ANGLED PASSAGE BE PREPARED BETWEEN THE FOLDS...

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

THE PORTAL IS DILATED! KICK HIM FREE! YOU HAVE NO TIME TO WASTE ON SUCH AS ME!
ARCANE! LET GO...
I HATE YOUDIESCUMKILL YOU MURDER EATYOURBRAINS HATE TEAR YOUR HEARTKILL YOU DEADDEADDEAD
SKUNK
:UUK:
NOW, TAKE HER FROM THESE STEWS AND FROZEN LAKES. SHE WILL REMEMBER NOT WHAT DID OCCUR, BUT IF IT PLEASE YOU, TELL HER WHEN SHE WAKES...
... A FLOWER GROWS YET IN HELL THAT'S NAMED FOR HER
HA HA HA


A-ALEC?
WH...?
OH, IT'S FREEZING! WHAT THE HELL ARE WE DOING OUT HERE IN THE SNOW?
UH, ALEC...? WHAT'S THE MATTER?

YOU'RE CRYING
ALAN MOORE, CORDWAINER SMITH & STEVE BISSETTE 6-8-89
40


CREATED BY
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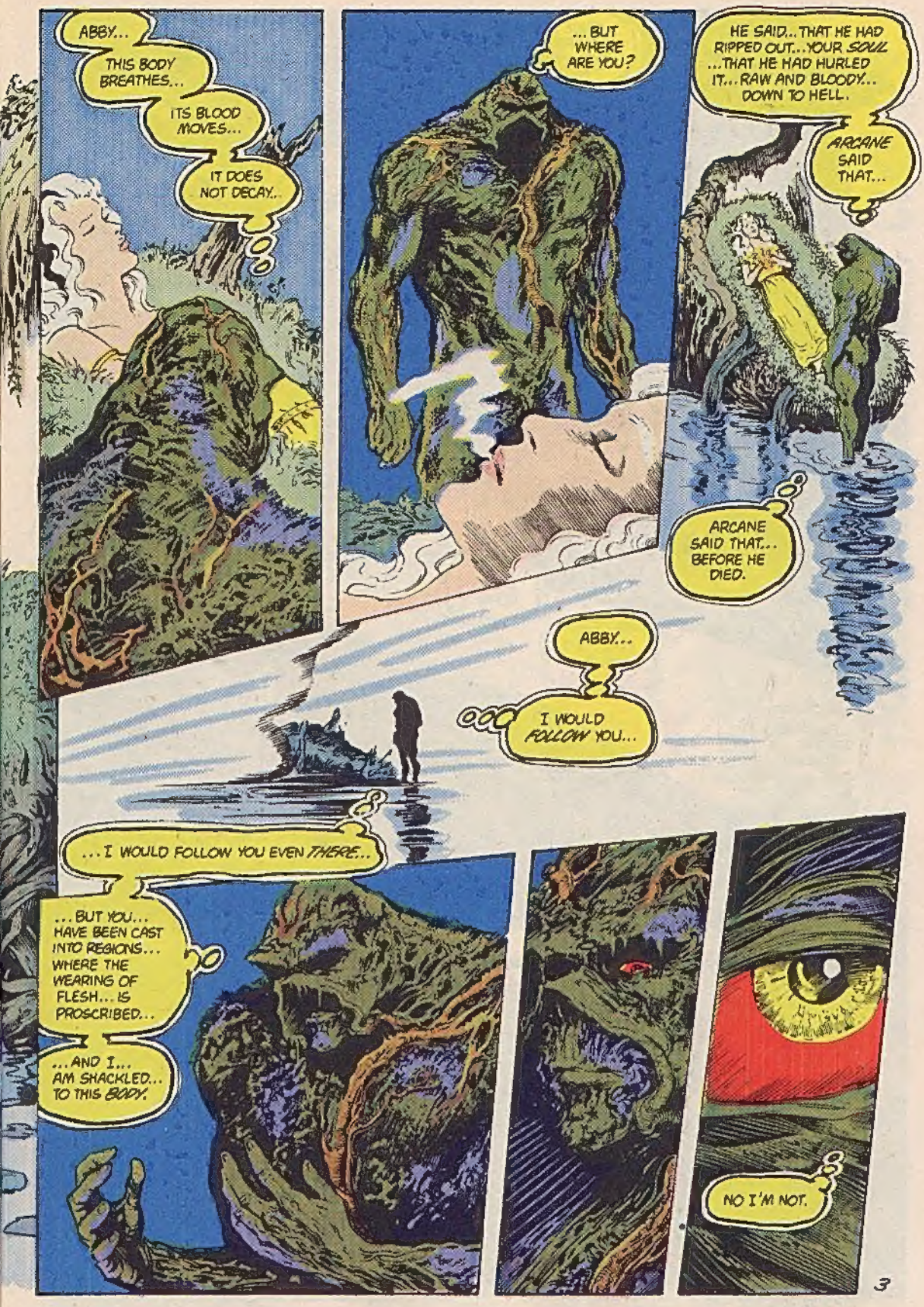
ABBY...
THIS BODY BREATHES...
ITS BLOOD MOVES...
IT DOES NOT DECAY..
...BUT WHERE ARE YOU?
HE SAID...THAT HE HAD RIPPED OUT...YOUR SOUL ...THAT HE HAD HURLED IT...RAW AND BLOODY... DOWN TO HELL.
ARCANE SAID THAT...
ARCANE SAID THAT... BEFORE HE DIED.
ABBY...
I WOULD FOLLOW YOU...
...I WOULD FOLLOW YOU EVEN THERE...
...BUT YOU... HAVE BEEN CAST INTO REGIONS... WHERE THE WEARING OF FLESH... IS PROSCRIBED...
...AND I... AM SHACKLED... TO THIS BODY.
NO I'M NOT.